

Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons

How "Tweet" It Isn't

- Standard: I. Culture
II. Time, Continuity, and Change
III. People, Places, and Environments
V. Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
VI. Production, Distribution, and Consumption
IX. Global Connections
- Grade Level: 9–12 (Synthesis and technology)
- Objectives: The student will:
- Extract ideas from a series of documents to use in another fashion
 - Determine the future outcomes related to this exchange of messages in class discussion
 - Transform long messages to concise ones, or "tweets"
 - Analyze what was happening and why it was unsuccessful
- Time: 2 class periods
- Materials: Documents: **1938** *The Fabric of Peace is in Immediate Danger*
1938 *The Fate of the World Today and Tomorrow*
1938 *Deeply Shocking News*
1939 *Millions Live in Fear*
1939 *A Catastrophe Near at Hand*
1939 *I Had Hopes for a Miracle*
- Exercises: *Tweet Sheet*
- Materials: Six (6) individual box lids labeled 1–6
Scissors
- Procedures:

Setting the Stage

In March 1938, Adolf Hitler seized Austria and turned his attention to neighboring Czechoslovakia. Hitler wanted to annex the part of Czech territory called the Sudetenland, because of its German population. President Franklin Roosevelt personally appealed to Hitler to avoid a world war, which now seemed inevitable.

Desperately clinging to a last chance for peace, the British and the French met with Hitler in Munich in September 1938. Without consulting the Czechs, they gave him the Sudetenland. This practice, known as appeasement, was the only diplomatic tactic they had left. While the Americans still maintained official neutrality, these actions of Hitler's solidified FDR's growing determination to aid Hitler's opponents.

Pre-Lesson

1. Find six box lids and use a marker to number them from 1 to 6. Put one document in the bottom of each box lid and place them at the center front of the classroom.

Day One Procedures

1. Ask students if they know what “tweeting” is? When do they use Twitter and for what? Find out who tweets the most often. Eliminate until you have the top three, then write their names on the board.

2. Distribute the six documents and ask the students to read quietly, writing very important key words in the margin. (Tweets will only be 140 characters, so even the word “character” counts for 9 characters.)

3. As they read, when they seem to be getting close to documents 5 and 6, hand out the *Tweet Sheet*.

4. When the students have finished reading and marking key words in all the documents, ask them to work with a partner to create a tweet for each document. They should be very careful to use the key words to convey the meaning accurately.

5. The last tweet will be doubly long—or 280 characters—synthesizing the message that FDR gave on the radio.

6. This will most likely take the whole class period. Ask the students to staple both sheets together and put their name on the top. Collect the sheets for the next lesson.

Day Two Procedures

1. Return the papers to the rightful owners.

2. Make sure all have finished their six tweets. Then ask them to cut their tweets into strips and put the messages in the appropriate boxes numbered 1 to 6. The tweet sheets have numbers in the upper right hand corner to help them know which box.

3. Ask the three students previously designated as the “top tweeters” to take the boxes to the back of the room and decide which tweets most effectively reduced the message to either 140 characters for documents 1–5, or 280 for the radio message. Place a copy of the document in the box if they need to refer to it.

- 4.** While this is happening discuss with the whole class:
 - a.** What is happening in Europe to prompt FDR to send these messages? What is FDR trying to do? What happened at Munich?
 - b.** How is the practice of appeasement becoming obvious and can appeasement be a positive or a negative in times of conflict? Can it be, as some historians have characterized it, a "surrender on an installment" plan?
 - c.** Why?
 - d.** Based on these messages, can the class predict the outcome?
 - e.** What is Roosevelt truly trying to tell the nation in his radio broadcast?
 - f.** How was information shared in the 1930s? How is information shared differently today?
 - g.** What do the students imagine might have happened if these leaders had communicated through tweets instead of news releases and telegrams? Give examples of what happened during Arab Spring, 2011 in the Middle East. How different might today's world have been if the messages of the 1930s had been shorter? And would that necessarily have been a good thing?
- 5.** By now the Tweet Judges should have a decision from each box. Have them present the best tweet to the teacher for the teacher to read to the class, starting with document no. 1, moving through to no. 6. (This will also reinforce the class discussion.)
- 6.** Find out who wrote each and ask each how difficult it was to reduce the message?
- 7.** On a separate sheet of paper ask the students to "reflect" on the two days and write a longer explanation (no restrictions on characters) on the challenges FDR was trying to resolve and what was preventing him from keeping the "fabric of peace" together.
- 8.** Collect the papers and respond to the student explanations. ■